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FITNESS FOR THE CHURCH.

WE were once silently working at a sewing-meeting. While thus occupied, we became cognizant of a conversation carried on among a group of young girls, while they busily plied their needles.

"Carry, did you know Ellen Grey was going to join the church next month?"

"Ellen Grey!" is the reply, in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes," says Anna, "and Fanny Morgan too; their names were read last Sunday, and I wish I was good enough to go with them."

"Well, I am not surprised at Fanny Morgan, she was always good; but Ellen has been *such* a gay thing: I wonder if she is willing to give up every thing; for, if she visits now, and wants to have any fun, people will talk about her."

Now another voice chimes in, and Clara questioningly says, "I should like to be religious, and I do try to be good; but I don't see but I can be just as good without 'joining the church'; and a great many things I can do, and be good too, that would be wrong if I were a church-member."

"So I think, Clara," says Grace; "and I don't believe I shall ever think it *my* duty 'to join the church.'"

Here the conversation was suddenly interrupted, and the young girls scattered; but not so easily would the thoughts, suggested

by those remarks, leave us. We sighed as we thought them over, and wondered whose the fault that these young hearts should speak so superficially and ignorantly of important Christian truths. They had intelligent parents, some of them very religious ones; all had been many years in the Sunday-school; yet here they were, talking of "waiting to be good" before they confessed Christ; looking upon religion as the sacrifice of every thing desirable in the world, showing so much more fear of the opinion of the world than of God; looking upon religious profession more as an institution of the church, that is to be complied with or not at pleasure, than as a command of Jesus to be obeyed; and calling that a duty simply which should be looked upon more as the highest privilege. It seems those young minds must unlearn much before they can receive the gospel in its simplicity.

Where can the idea of "waiting to be good," before coming to the baptismal waters, have come from? It has prevailed very much in our denomination, and very much to our detriment. For when did such a waiting ever receive its fulfilment? when did it ever bring a disciple to Jesus? It may be it has sprung from an ideal of goodness that is presumed must belong to the disciples of Jesus, and partly from a habit of looking at the Christian ordinances as an end rather than as a means. It has been said that our pulpit has taught it, and it is also said to be but a device of the human heart to excuse its neglect of its most important duties. However it may be, we claim it is not true; and the sooner it is done away with, the better for the young people of our churches. For assuredly the time when they feel satisfied with themselves is not the time for us to be satisfied with them; not the time we should choose "to present them to the Lord." Repentance is the thing the gospel demands, and decision,—"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Goodness is nowhere made a requisite. Jesus says, "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," "to seek and to save that which was lost." We would urge the young to come to Jesus, because there is no other salvation from the sin of their own hearts; because there is no true life without him; because they cannot live safely nor happily without him. We would reveal him to them as their Saviour; we would show them the unmeaningness, hollowness, and vanity of life without him, and

all its beauty and harmony, and peace and progress with him; we would show them their own weakness in their best strength, and then that very weakness "strengthened through Christ." If, happily, their hearts shall melt within them, and, throwing away all "the righteousness of the law" which they have vainly been striving to fulfil, they shall come to ask of Christ, "How shall we be saved? we feel our need of Jesus," — shall we bid them *wait* then? shall we not rather say, in Jesus' words, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments," and one of those is "to be baptized"? They would look upon it then, not as some terrible vow that should shut them out from every thing that was pleasant, and array them before an earthly tribunal which is to take cognizance of every thing they do in a captious, fault-finding way, — but as the answer of their hearts to their now-acknowledged Master, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Has goodness any place as an emotion there? Is goodness requisite to bring the soul there? Is it not rather the humble faith "which shall be accounted unto it for righteousness"? The spirit, standing thus penitent, prayerful, but decided and hopeful, "looking unto Jesus," thinks little of the opinions of the world, much of the dear Master it has chosen, little of the influence it may exert by its outward act, much of the good that shall come to its own soul from such communings as the ordinances shall give occasion for. Upon the frame of such a mind, how chillingly fall such remarks of fitness and goodness as have been given! Have not every one of us in our lives been repelled by them, and, when coming as they often do from Christians, filling the mind with strange bewilderment? We will hope for a better state of things; we will hope for the time when Christians shall throw no stumbling-block in the way of the younger ones. It may be a hope looking for great things, but we will wait patiently for its fulfilment.

To refer to another false impression, that of "giving up every thing," as it is called. If every thing evil was there meant, there would be no objection to it; but it does not mean that: it means that religion is a sacrifice of every thing that makes life desirable; it means that religion is but the synonyme for dulness and gloom. We deny it. We maintain that the true Christian has a right to be the happiest person in the world; that he can claim the enjoyment of the best things in this world, and has moreover "the promise of that which is to come." The world is

strangely mistaken in its judgments on that point. Christianity demands no such sacrifices from its followers, as the world demands from its votaries. Sacrifices enough it claims; but they are sacrifices that in every case tend to happiness; but when does any real enjoyment come from the frivolity, waste of time and health, and strength and wealth, and faculties and affections, that are continually laid upon the world's altar? In whose favor is the balance of enjoyment? — in that of the enlightened conscience, obedient life, unselfish, affectionate heart, of the Christian; or in the objectless life, and aimless purpose, and contracted heart, and perverted sense, of the one who makes "this frail world his final rest"? It may be that Christians have not always made Christianity lovely; but the spirit of Christ *always* brings happiness to the heart wherein it dwells, and sanctifies to it every moment and every event of its life.

We know that Christ said in this world, "We should have tribulation;" but he also said, "In *me* ye shall have peace." Evil is "as the heart upon which it falls." What Christian heart has not felt, upon looking back, that the evils it most feared, and from which it suffered most, were in reality its greatest blessings, — what it needed most? There is no truer verse than that one, "All things work together *for good* to them that love God." Sin is the only real evil to a Christian; and no one, be he saint or sinner, can claim exemption from the tribulation that that brings.

There is an idea of religion among non-professors that savors more of asceticism than cheerful piety. It would shut the Christian out of social enjoyments and recreations; and doubts at once the depth of the religious feeling that craves amusement, that enjoys a dance or a comic song, and loves a laugh or a frolic; as if the Christian could put off his humanity, and put on his religion, as one does a garment; as if the spirit of mirth and cheerfulness was not as much a need and gift, "after its own kind," as the spirit of thoughtfulness and prayer. We doubt very much for one, whether, if Christians secluded themselves as they are bidden to do, the world or the Christians would be the gainers. The world certainly needs all the leavening it can get of a better spirit. Let the Christian by all means "give up" — he is no Christian if he does not strive to — wickedness in every shape and form; but let him not think that isolation

will ever save him from temptation. The sources of temptation are in his own bosom.

Let us not be understood as inculcating conformance to the world, striving to reconcile "God and Mammon." We would rather conform the world to a Christian spirit; and so, in closing these remarks, we would not say to the young disciple that it "must give up every thing," meaning all social enjoyments and pleasures; but we would say, Go among them with a new spirit, be good, and do good there; and bid your conscience tell you how far you can safely go, where once you thoughtlessly went all lengths.

And here we make our protest against the world's judgment of church-members, and the strange judgments church-members pass upon one another. To their own Master they stand and fall. He has constituted himself their Judge, to whose laws they stand amenable. They who sit as judges in this tribunal, whether of the world or of the church, are alike unqualified. The one, because they decide from a wrong point of view; the others, because they, too, stand as suppliants for the mercy they refuse. Who should be so merciful, so considerate, so full of the spirit of love, as those who are travelling the same road? Have they not known it all,—the repentance, the pardon, the joy of believing? and do they not know, too, the mournful falling away, and the vain repents? They should not be judges. They should weep and pray, and lift up those that fall or go astray, and set them gently and kindly on their way. If penitent, their own hearts reproach them enough; and, if not penitent, reproach but hardens them.

We believe this fear of the world's opinions has made more than one hypocrite before God and man. The censoriousness of the world needs to be reminded perpetually of Jesus' words, "He shall have judgment without mercy, who showed no mercy." Let the disciple fear the judgment of God, and he need fear no other. Is it said such restraint is needed? It seems not so to us. The conscientious find their restraint in the word of their Master; and the restraint of those who are not so is hypocrisy. We demand for the Christian the same independence as is allowed to the unregenerate man. He certainly has the best right to it. To him who calls God to be his lawgiver, "it is a small matter to be judged of men's judgments." That they are not so inde-

pendent, one plainly sees by the apologies Christians are constantly making, for doing what no reasonable person doubts their right to do; that they are not allowed to be so, we as plainly see from the severe judgments that are constantly and unjustly passed upon them. We are weary of all this judging and dictating. We are resolved never more to defend ourselves under it. We will protest, and acknowledge no man's commission to sit as judge over us; and may grace be given us not to commit the sins against which we thus protest!

We have quoted at the commencement the idea, that "one can be as good without joining the church as with;" and we think that an evil, which we charge upon the pulpit, — with exceptions, of course. It may have been done unconsciously, in some cases we presume conscientiously, from the tendency among us as a denomination to do away with ordinances, — not upon the principle of the Friends, but as a kind of transcendentalism, as if we could get above the need of them. A strange idea! To get beyond the wisdom of Jesus who instituted them! We do not imagine any one will say we are entirely mistaken in this assertion. We speak advisedly. It has seemed to us a long time as if the effects of those ways of thinking had injured the real spiritual life of our churches in an incalculable degree. It is to be hoped their day is over, and "the truth as it is in Jesus" may be allowed its legitimate power.

No one in our congregational churches claims that baptism is a regenerating form. That is a doctrine of the episcopal church, and would seem to be as far from the truth, as the denial of any efficacy to be derived from it. The congregational churches seem to be nearest the truth, in their definition of it as the form of religious profession instituted by Jesus. Would it not be as well to answer the young minds that make this plea, by asking them of the authority of the command? If they do not see it in the Sacred Record, then there is nothing more to be said; for nobody ever doubted but that the large body of Christians called Friends were sincere in their distinguishing principles upon this point, not seeing the scriptural obligation of baptism. But too often, it is to be feared, the plea is made, because the heart is not decided. It does not dare to commit itself. It would really put it off "till a more convenient season." To how many does such a season ever come? We have had to combat that idea more than

once in our lives. It is always a mournful thing to us. It always reminds us of the young man who "went away sorrowful," — we hear no more of him.

We are quite aware that the truth of our last remark will be disputed, because we have heard "the duty of baptism" so often urged; and it may be that many have come forward on that ground, who might never have come forward on any other. We insist, nevertheless, that it is not the highest ground. In the church that baptizes by immersion, it is often called "a cross;" but it is only the form there that troubles them, not the thing signified. When we think about it *all*, — of God, and all he has done for us, and never ceases to do for us, — "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." When an earthly parent gives us some faint approximation to the idea of the fatherhood of God, it does not come to our minds that it is our *duty* to love him. When we remember Jesus, the manifestation of the Father; when we are in contemplation of his perfections, the harmonious blending of wisdom, goodness, and loveliness; and our hearts are entirely subdued and overcome, melting in tenderness and love; and we wish we could have "sat at his feet" with Mary, or, like the other Mary, kissed them in our reverent and humble devotion, — who has thought of duty then? Who would chill the warm tide of emotion with so cold a word? If we have earthly friends whose goodness draws us to them, do we think it our duty to love them? Is it not rather a blessed privilege, for which we are inexpressibly grateful? And what shall it be, then, to know that Jesus, God's holy Son, is our Friend, our Saviour? To know not only that we love him, but that he loves us; to be sure that he is with us always when we pray, "helping our infirmities," when we suffer, putting his shoulder to our cross, that the burden be more easily borne; with us when we are happy, — can we not realize his gentle, kindly sympathy, and be more glad for it? And, more than all, with us when we sin, — for then he knows we most need him, — can we not see his look as of old, when "he turned and looked upon Peter," so full of grieving mournfulness; no reproach, no sharp censure, such as the world gives us then, but pity and sorrow for the pain and remorse that must follow? Can such a being claim only our duty? Away with the cold word! We rejoice that we may give him our hearts' deepest love.

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." May no unworthiness of ours, no coldness or deadness of heart, render us unfit to receive the blessing that follows a living faith in Jesus ! Let us not, by our unbelief, crucify the Son of God afresh; but unto every one of us be given grace, "till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." A.

THE

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH OF MARTIN LUTHER.*

IN the small town of Eisleben, numbering some five thousand inhabitants, there lived towards the close of the fifteenth century an humble miner, named Hans Luther. From the Hartz mountains lying to the north-west, a vein of copper, with a small ingredient of silver, extends to the former place. In these mines Hans Luther found employment, which, however, proved so far from profitable, that his utmost efforts were hardly sufficient to supply his family with the common necessities of life. Persevering industry finally met its reward; and, in course of time, Hans rose from the condition of a peasant to that of a burgher or free citizen. In the meantime, however, his family had been gradually increased by the birth of three or four sons, who, with one exception, bade fair to move on contentedly in the humble sphere in which they were born. With one exception; for Providence had marked

* The accounts given of Luther's early life have been in most cases incomplete and unsatisfactory. The wide variety of sources from which it was necessary to gather such materials as were in existence has discouraged most of his biographers from making the attempt. Two years since, however, Dr. Sears, whose historical tastes and sometime residence in Germany peculiarly fitted him for the task, prepared a life of Luther, with special reference to its earlier periods, and the opening scenes of the Reformation. This volume, published under the auspices of the American Sunday-school Union, brings together many new facts, and corrects important errors into which former writers on the subject have fallen. I would refer all, who desire a more complete account of this interesting period in Luther's life than is contained in the present sketch, to this work, from which its facts are chiefly gathered.

out for one of their number a more brilliant career, and assigned to him a more important field of labor.

The closing portion of the fifteenth century was marked by two events, which, for their importance bearing upon the destinies of mankind, deserve to be classed together. Martin Luther, the Great Apostle of the Reformation, was born Nov. 10, 1483; and from this era religious freedom dates its most powerful impulse. Not quite ten years afterwards, the discovery of the New World offered to the oppressed of all nations a place of refuge, and opened the way for the establishment of a republican government, to which the friends of political freedom all over the world are looking with hopeful confidence. On the day following his birth, according to the custom of the times, the young Luther was carried to the parish-church, and there baptized under the name of Martin, as that chanced to be St. Martin's day. It is not a little characteristic of the religious sentiments of that period, that it was deemed essential to bring the new-born child, in imagination at least, in connection with some saint; and it was believed that this connection would lead to a resemblance of character and life.

About six months after Luther's birth, his father was induced to remove to Mansfeld, about six miles distant, which, though much smaller than Eisleben, seems to have afforded greater facilities for the mining business. Nevertheless, Luther always cherished an affectionate remembrance of his birthplace; and there yet exists at Eisleben a flourishing Latin high-school, which owes its establishment to his active benevolence. In Mansfeld, then, Luther passed the first thirteen years of his life. He was necessarily obliged to submit to the privations incident to the humble occupation of his father; and these, according to his own statement, were far from inconsiderable. "My parents," says Luther, "were in the beginning right poor. My father was a poor mine-digger, and my mother did carry her wood on her shoulders; and after this sort did they support us, their children. They had a sharp, bitter experience of it: no one would do likewise now." Notwithstanding his humble means and limited advantages, the father of Luther won the respect of his fellow-citizens by his frankness, honesty, and decision of character. His appointment to a seat in the council, shortly after his removal to Mansfeld, may be regarded as an evidence of the confidence

generally felt in him. He was strongly marked by the rudeness and severity which characterized the age, having more force than tenderness of character. Luther's mother is described by Melanchthon as having "many virtues agreeing to her sex, and was especially notable for her chaste conversation, godly fear, and diligent prayer, insomuch that other honorable women looked upon her as a model of virtue and honesty." Like her husband, she was deficient in the milder virtues.

In order to a right understanding of Luther's character, it is necessary to glance at the nature of the influences which surrounded him, and to trace out the successive steps in his education. As might be inferred from the character of his parents, great care was bestowed upon Luther's early training. From infancy, he was taught to fear the Lord, and to reverence the then existing institutions of religion. But it was a religion of fear, not of love, inculcated by law and authority, not by persuasion. The young Martin was taught to fear God as a Being who had it in his power to doom him to a future of endless misery: he did not recognize in him the benevolent Giver of all the earthly blessings which he enjoyed. In other respects, the parental discipline was equally strict; so that Martin, instead of giving way to the open and graceful impulses of childhood, grew unnaturally shy and timid. His warm and naturally confiding heart was closed up by the chill of outward propriety. "Once," says he, "did my father beat me so sharply, that I fled away from him, and was angry against him, till by diligent endeavor he gained me back. Once did my mother, for a small nut, beat me till the blood came forth. Their intent and purpose were of the best kind; but they knew not how to put a difference between dispositions, and to order their discipline accordingly; for that it should be exercised in a way that the apple should be put with the rod."

The school-house is still standing in Mansfeld to which Luther was sent at the age of seven. The severity and restraints of home, far from being diminished, were now greatly increased. On one occasion, he was flogged fifteen times in one forenoon. From this circumstance, some idea may be formed of the character of these schools. "The schools were purgatories, and the teachers were tyrants and task-masters." While attending this school, Martin was in the habit of going out with his companions to beg

food. The customs of the time, and his father's poverty, led to this step. "At Christmas," he tells us, "during divine service, we went round among the small villages, singing from house to house, in four parts, as we were wont, the hymn of the child Jesus born at Bethlehem." At other times, he was accustomed to attend funeral processions as a singer, for which he received a groschen (about three cents) each time. The school at Mansfeld may be considered as a fair representative of a large class then existing in Germany. In these "trivial" schools,—for such they were called,—were taught originally the first three of the seven liberal arts, namely, grammar, rhetoric, and logic. At this time, however, the branches of instruction were confined to "a little monkish Latin, the pieces of music commonly sung at church, and the elements of arithmetic." The teachers were drawn, almost without exception, from the clergy, and from those who were engaged in the study of theology. Thus an intimate connection was established between the church and public instruction. The powerful engine which this might and did prove in the hands of a priesthood desirous in every way of strengthening the church may easily be conceived, since all who were desirous of securing instruction, with the exception of a few rich men's sons, must receive it at their hands. Among the first lessons inculcated by parental lips was reverence for the church; and this formed the burden of the child's whole public instruction. But little attention was paid to the ordinary branches of education, as taught at the present day; while, in their place, the boys were carefully trained to perform church ceremonies. Church rites were in this way so closely interwoven with the general system of school-instruction that the latter may be considered as forming a part and parcel of the former. The subordinate teachers were, as has already been intimated, theological students,—"strolling young men who infested the country, going from place to place, either as advanced students, and changing their place at pleasure, or seeking some subordinate employment in the schools or in the church." The name by which they were commonly designated was *bacchantes*.

The internal organization of these schools, and the manners and habits which prevailed in them, form a curious and interesting study. Thomas Platter, a contemporary of Luther, and a native of Switzerland, presents us with a lively picture of them,

gathered from personal experience. "We went at first into the school at the dome of the Holy Cross; but, learning that there were some Switzer youth in the parish of St. Elizabeth, we removed thither. The city of Breslau hath seven parishes, with a school in each. No scholar is suffered to go around singing in another parish; and, if any taketh upon him to do so, he getteth a sound beating. Sometimes, it is said, sundry thousands of scholars are found in Breslau, who get their living by begging. Some bacchantes abide in the schools twenty or even thirty years, having their sustentation from what their wards beg. I have oftentimes borne five or six loads home to the school the self-same evening for my bacchantes; for, being small, and a Switzer besides, I was kindly received by the people. In the winter, the small boys were wont to sleep on the floor of the school-house; the bacchantes in the meantime sleeping in the cells, whereof there are not a few at the school of St. Elizabeth. In the warm parts of the year, we were wont to lie on the ground in the churchyard; and, when it rained, to run into the school-house; and, if it stormed vehemently, to sing responses and other pieces the whole night long with the sub-chanter. Ofttimes, after supper, in the summer evenings, did we go into the beer-houses to buy beer, and sometimes would drink so much that we could not find our way back. To be short, there was plenty of food, but not much studying, here."

In a school of this description, Luther remained until his fourteenth year. For the six years in a boy's life, the most valuable for purposes of instruction, he could show but a beggarly list of acquirements. They are somewhere enumerated by Mathesius, his intimate friend, as follows: "While at Mansfeld, Luther learned the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Donatus (author of a Latin Grammar), the Child's Grammar, Cisio Janus, a church calendar in monkish Latin verse, and church music." Considering the defective system of instruction pursued, and the incompetency of his instructors, we are surprised to find that in the face of so many disadvantages he should have learned so much as he did.

The time had now come when the school at Mansfeld could no longer meet his wants. Full of privation as his life had hitherto been, a harder lot awaited him. He must now leave the parental roof which had hitherto sheltered him, and go forth among stran-

gers, without money, experience, or friends. He did not, however, go forth entirely alone, but was sent in company with a fellow-student, some years older than himself. There was at Magdeburg a school under the direction of Franciscan friars, and it was to this city that the two boys directed their steps. Leaving their home on the border of the Hartz mountains, they journeyed on foot, about fifty miles, through a rich and level country, to Magdeburg, a large and fortified city. This journey must have been an interesting one for our young traveller. Hitherto his life had been passed within the narrow limits of a petty provincial town, of little more than a thousand inhabitants. His eyes must have rested with delighted surprise upon the thousand new objects which everywhere marked his route. A large and splendid capital, to which the residence of the archbishop added gayety and éclat, met his eyes for the first time. But the school-room of the gloomy Franciscan cloister, which was to be his future residence, had nothing in common with the festive scene without. The austerity of his new teachers harmonized well with the outward gloom which reigned in the convent. The dark clerical robes which he was obliged to assume on entrance fitly symbolized the dark shadow which rested upon his naturally buoyant and cheerful disposition. As was the custom at that time, he was obliged to earn his bread by choral and other services in the church, and by singing with his companions from door to door. On the whole, his residence at Magdeburg proved even more painful than at Mansfeld. The religious influences to which he was subjected were of the same character as before, while in the mode of instruction there was no material improvement. His efforts to obtain food were so far insufficient that he was often compelled to suffer the pangs of unsatisfied hunger.

It was with feelings of joy, that, after a year's residence in Magdeburg, Luther turned his steps homeward, whence he was immediately to repair to Eisenach, where there was a good Latin school. Here, for the first time, he found skilful and sympathizing teachers; and here, too, he probably first acquired a real love of learning. Time demonstrated that his past backwardness arose from no want of natural aptitude. Now that all obstacles were removed, his mind expanded with a rapid yet healthy growth. The ease with which he excelled his fellow-pupils was an earnest of the remarkable powers which distinguished him in after-life.

The mists of prejudice and superstition were rapidly disappearing, though the errors of early education can never be entirely overcome.

His preparatory studies being at length completed, Luther entered the celebrated university at Erfurt. So far did it exceed all other seats of learning in size and influence, that they "were but as grammar-schools compared to it." The university-life of Luther contrasts favorably with his school-experience, embittered as it was by privation, severity, and ignorance. His father's circumstances had been gradually improving, so that he was now enabled to maintain his son comfortably. Among the thousand students who frequented the university, there were many whose tastes resembled his own, with whom he could engage in an honorable competition. The four years which he passed at Erfurt were marked by a progress so rapid as to win golden opinions from all. We may imagine him applying himself with eager enthusiasm, now to the Greek and Roman classics, and now to the rhetoric and logic of Aristotle. Originally designed for the legal profession, it was not without the severest disappointment that his friends heard of his determination to enter the church. To this step he was led partly by his predilection for theological studies and the nature of his early education, but more immediately by the serious impression made upon his mind by the sudden death of his friend Alexis, who perished at his side by a stroke of lightning, while journeying in his company from Mansfeld to Erfurt.

We have now accompanied Luther through the scenes of privation which attended his boyhood, through his somewhat more cheerful residence at Eisenach, to the termination of his brilliant career at the university. We have seen the character of the various influences which successively acted upon him,—the severe discipline of home, the restraints of school, and the gloomy views of religion inculcated by his early instructors. As yet, his mind had not cast off the reverence which he had been taught to cherish for the Roman church. But the time was not far distant when his mission was to be revealed to him. A future, more brilliant than he had ever dreamed of, crowded with great and exciting events, lay before him. The son of the humble miner of Eisleben, who for so many years had wandered through the streets of Mansfeld and Magdeburg begging for bread, was destined to

occupy a higher place in history than any man of his age. The memorable words addressed to him, when dangerously ill at Erfurt, by an aged monk, seem almost prophetic: "Be of good cheer, my brother; you will not die at this time. God will yet make a great man of you, who shall comfort many others. Whom he loveth and purposeth to make a blessing, upon him he early layeth the cross; and, in that school, those who patiently endure, learn much."

D. R.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

It is to be distinctly affirmed, that the Holy Scriptures lay great stress on the sufferings of Christ. In the Epistles these sufferings are adverted to with great frequency; and an importance is attached to them, which shows that in the apprehension of the apostles they possessed virtue or power of no inconsiderable efficacy in that divine order of life which had been intrusted to them to disseminate and establish in the world. Prophecy pointed to Jesus Christ as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as him upon whom the Lord would lay the iniquity of the world; and apostolic teaching, taking up the language of prophecy, referred back to him as one "who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness;" and one "by whose stripes we are healed."

How great the sufferings of Christ were while he abode in the flesh, having taken upon himself the form of a servant, it is impossible for us to know; for it is impossible for us, with our natures, upon which the taint of sin has fastened, fully to experience. That they were intense beyond what any human being ever endured, even beyond what any human being can conceive of, can be easily enough imagined, and must be affirmed in view of what he was in nature and character.

There was one quality in the sufferings of Christ, or rather one description of suffering which he endured, which has not been so generally brought forward and considered, as the importance attaching to it, as well as its character, demands. I refer to what I shall call his sympathetic compassion for man as a sinner; that agony of soul, that anguish of spirit, which he experi-

enced, in view of the actual condition of man as he saw it. In the view which I am now taking of the sufferings of Christ, I leave out of the account entirely what are usually called his external trials and hardships; such as his great poverty; such as the hindrances and difficulties he encountered as a teacher; such as the contempt, persecution, and danger which he experienced. Great as these trials may have been, disheartening as they may have been, sufficient as they may have seemed at times to overwhelm with dismay the magnanimity of the most exalted love; still, as I conceive, they are scarcely to be named at all, in connection with what constituted the real sufferings which he endured, — that which he experienced in consequence and by virtue of his sympathy with and compassion for man as a sinner, — as a being originally created in the image of God, but with that image terribly marred, and in some instances almost entirely defaced, — as a being originally made upright, but who had wofully fallen from his integrity, — as a being whom the love of God once blessed and cherished, but who had become a sad and weary wanderer from his Father's home. This was an experience, it seems to me, which the Saviour was almost all the time enduring, to which only occasional interruptions were granted, and which at times was such a burden to his soul as well nigh to crush him to the earth. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, how could he have been otherwise, as being himself without spot or blemish, without the least taint of sin, — with all the sensibilities that made him the friend and brother of man intensely active within him, and at the same time knowing fully what was in man, not only what thoughts and feelings and hopes were there, but what misery, how much moral impurity, how much spiritual deformity, was there; knowing all this, because seeing it all, having it all mapped out before him in all its dark and dreadful lines?

I am not anxious to push this view of the sufferings of Christ beyond what the teachings of the New Testament will justify. I do not maintain, that his whole earthly existence was an uninterrupted period of the most intense mental anguish; for it is evident enough, that there were some scenes in his life which must have afforded him cheerful and happy emotions. There were times when he rejoiced in spirit. But after all, notwithstanding there may have been occasions when he could rejoice either in view

of the present results of his divine ministry or of its future success, the burden of human guilt and human misery must have been ever upon him, — a burden as much more oppressive to him, as in sympathy he felt its weight upon him, as he was more exalted than any human being.

And here let it be remarked, that it was a sinful, a very sinful world, into which Christ the Saviour, having left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, descended, — a world “whose wickedness God saw to be very great;” a people, “the imagination of whose thoughts, as they came up before him, was evil continually.” This is no exaggeration. It is no more than a plain statement of a most melancholy fact. What the Apostle Paul represented the condition of mankind to be, quoting from the Psalms, it must be admitted to have been: “There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Reason as we may about the subject, make what apologies we will for men, the fact of universal alienation from God, the fact of a deep-rooted depravity in the heart of man, — a depravity which is at the same time an offence in the sight of Heaven, and misery in the human soul, — cannot be denied. All human thought, — all human expression, — alike the poetry, the romance, the history, and the tradition of all nations, — indicate a consciousness of this fact. Whence comes it, that, even as far back as human tradition goes, there has ever been an indescribable dread of evil overhanging the human spirit? Whence comes it, that man everywhere, even from the beginning until now, has been haunted by shadows of wrath, from which he knew not how to escape? Whence comes it, that, even under the most sottish and debasing forms of idolatry, conscience has ever been found struggling with guilty fears; from every quarter seeking peace, and finding none? Whence has all this come but from the fact that sin was in the world? — whence but from the fact that sin has entered into the human

heart, and perverted human affections, and depraved human desires? There is no exaggeration here, but only what all human history teaches, and all human experience affirms. Yes, all human experience. That man does not anywhere walk this earth, whose spirit has not been touched by the taint of sin. It is this fact,—sin as an organic power in human society, working out all forms of mischief,—as a controlling agency in human hearts, full of evil devices,—which has made man and the world what they are at this day. This is the fruitful cause of all the hatreds, and all the jealousies and enmities and rivalries, and all the selfishness and contention, and all the discords of whatever nature and character, which make the present condition of the world, whether contemplated in the action and relationships of nations or in the conduct and relationship of individuals, what it is. Sin—this is the master-evil in the world,—the evil which has alienated man from his God, and which is day by day alienating man from his fellow-man.

Now, let us consider who and what was Jesus Christ, who for a season took up his abode on this earth. He was “the word of God made flesh, and dwelling among men;” “the Son of God;” “the light” and “the life” of the world; “the way and the truth and the life,”—the only way of approaching to the Father; he whom “the Father sanctified, and sent into the world,” “to bear witness to the truth;” one in “whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” one “in whom God himself was reconciling the world to himself;” one who had a right to say, “I and my Father are one,” “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;” at the same time one who was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” “who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” Thus pure, thus holy, thus exalted, thus divine, was Jesus Christ; not a man, as I read the New Testament, in the same sense in which Peter, John, or Paul was a man; but a being expressing and manifesting in his own person the moral perfections of the infinite Jehovah. This very being, let it be borne in mind,—so pure, so holy, so divine,—was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted in all points like as we are; only the taint of sin did not attach to his spirit. He who was thus holiness itself, who was purity itself; he who was the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; who, being in the form of God, thought it

not robbery to be equal with God, — was made, by a decree of God's love and compassion, to take his place, for a season, in humanity, — and that humanity fallen from its uprightness, and sunken in shame, — to be bone of its bone, and flesh of its flesh, and blood of its blood; to take his place as a man among men, and they burdened with sin and groaning in sorrow.

Consider now what Christ was in himself, — how pure, how holy, how divine. Consider how he must necessarily have possessed a nature of the acutest sensibilities, — a nature susceptible of the keenest, the most excruciating suffering, from causes which would scarcely excite any emotion in the human breast as ordinarily found. And consider, also, what man was in himself, — a poor, miserable, sorrowing, sinful creature, living without God and without hope in the world, — a being originally created in the image of God, it is true; but that image now dreadfully marred, scarcely retaining any well-defined lineament of its original purity. Here, on the one side, was purity itself in immediate contact with impurity on the other; holiness with unholiness; the benignant compassions of God himself with the waywardness, the folly, and the impiety of man. Could there have been such a relationship as this here on earth, without intense suffering on one side? Is it possible for a perfectly pure, a perfectly holy being to come into such immediate contact with an impure, an unholy being; to be witness to his degradation; to behold his misery, and at the same time his insensibility, — without intense suffering, without having the fountain of deep feeling stirred within him? Jesus the exalted, man the fallen; — the one pleading with the other, striving to lift him up out of the degradation into which he had sunken, manifesting an infinite concern for his present and eternal well-being, — could Jesus have done this, without deeply sympathizing with man in his misery, and profoundly compassionating his condition? If a truly pure-minded man is profoundly grieved at any exhibition of human depravity with which he comes in contact; if sorrow fills his heart as he beholds one and another of his fellow-men, — some dear friend, a father, a son, or a brother, for example, — obstinately pursuing the downward road to ruin; sorrow which is intense anguish to his spirit, — how much more must Jesus have been grieved, how much more sorrow must have filled his heart, as he looked upon man, whose sins had greatly estranged him

from God, and filled his mind with impure thoughts and unholy desires, from that elevation of perfect moral purity in which he himself ever dwelt!

Here let it be considered, that according to the degree of the Saviour's exaltation must have been the acuteness of his perception of the native worth, dignity, and glory of the human soul; and also of the injury which sin had done and was doing it; just as the man of a cultivated taste and refined sensibilities and high moral attainments is able to discover beauties and defects in objects about him, in works of art, in painting, sculpture, architecture, and in the productions of the pen, and is affected by them with feelings of pleasure or pain, where the uncultivated and unrefined are insensible to either. Consequently, the same sin which any man, even the very best of men, would look upon with comparative composure, would affect Jesus in the most painful manner. If the righteous soul of just Lot, as the Scriptures declare, was vexed with the filthy conversation and unlawful deeds of the wicked among whom he dwelt, how much more must the pure and holy Jesus have been grieved at the wickedness of the world?

Sympathy and compassion for man a sinner, for man a miserable and sorrowing creature, for man lost to a sense of duty, lost to a sense of God's love and power,—this was the feeling, at times full of anguish, which the Saviour ever bore about with him, while he abode on earth and among men. How much of actual suffering there was in it, we can get some idea of, though an inadequate one, from what we know of the sufferings of any fellow-man under circumstances of some similarity. Take, for example, the case of a parent whose son has abandoned himself to an infamous course of life. How much sorrow of heart that parent experiences, on account of that wayward and rebellious child, especially if he be a man possessed of a pious and affectionate heart! Is not this the greatest calamity that can come upon such a man? In comparison, would he not experience a satisfaction in following that son, as a dutiful child and the dependence of his old age, to the grave, rather than to witness his disgrace and infamy? What sacrifices would he not gladly make? what tortures would he not be willing to undergo to save that son, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, over whose pillow his heart had so much rejoiced, and whose early steps he had watched and guided with all a

father's honest pride? How thoughts of that lost one weigh upon his troubled spirit! With what beseeching importunities, with what groanings of his spirit which cannot be uttered, do his prayers daily and hourly ascend to Heaven in behalf of that child? How he goes about in sorrow all the day, having this grief ever abiding with him, and wasting away under the burden which has been laid upon him! This is no common sorrow, an experience that can be easily cast aside or soon forgotten, but rather a sorrow that becomes as the spell of death upon the soul. Somewhat such, but necessarily more intense, it appears to me, was the suffering which Jesus endured in behalf of fallen and sinful man; somewhat the same in nature, but much more intense in degree; for he expressed in his person the love and tenderness and compassion of God the Father in behalf of his children here on earth, who had become estranged from him. It was the infinite concern of God in behalf of man that he expressed.

There were several occasions in the life of our Saviour, when his sufferings, in behalf of mankind, seem to have taken the form of the most overwhelming agony. Such in a degree was his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when he went up to that devoted city for the last time, and his approach to it was hailed with hal-lelujahs by the multitude who came out to do him homage. In the midst of the general rejoicing, he could only weep. There were the people before him, in the thronged streets of that magnificent city, to whom he had declared God's love and tenderness, and for whom his own heart was then yearning with more than a father's compassion; and they not only indifferent to his teachings, and unmoved by his love, but, worse than this, the time was already nigh at hand, when they would be clamoring for his death. Great was the sorrow that filled his heart; but it was the sorrow of divine sympathy, the sorrow of heavenly compassion. Let those rejoice who could at such an hour: Jesus the Saviour could only weep. Let others rejoice, for there was reason why they should; the kingdom of God had come nigh unto them: but Jesus the Saviour could only weep, for the work was not yet finished which had been given him to do. He wept because there was grief in his heart. Another occasion of a similar kind, but more intense in its form, was the agony of the garden. What he endured there,—that bloody sweat which burst in drops from the opened pores of his agitated body,—what was the cause of it?

May it not have been that the rage and malice of man, which were pursuing him then even unto death, appeared so dark and hideous to his vision, showed such utter estrangement from God, and represented to him in such repulsive forms of atrocity the evil which sin had not only wrought in the hearts of those who were then seeking to destroy him, but also in all mankind, that his agony was almost too intense for his delicate and sensitive body? And that prayer, that if possible "the cup might pass from him," — may it not have been a petition to God that the purpose of his coming into the world might be accomplished without any additional exhibition of human depravity and human insensibility? May it not have been this? must it not have been this, whatever else it may have been? Another occasion was the closing scene on the cross, when, with a loud voice, he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What was this but the language of intense suffering, an interjection of spiritual anguish, which that last exhibition of human atrocity and blindness, which were manifested there in scoffs and revilings, made the closing experiences in the tragedy of his earthly life? May it not have been this? must it not have been this, whatever else it may have been? Then it was finished. There his sufferings in the flesh, which from the beginning to the end had been a most intense sympathy with and compassion for man; a form of feeling which would not have been manifested by any being human or divine, without the acutest suffering, —there his sufferings in the flesh were ended, and became henceforward and for evermore an integral force in the agencies which God is employing in the redemption of the world.

Let it be considered now, that the Saviour underwent all this torture, not for the sake of making an exhibition before the world, but incidentally. That is to say, he suffered as he did and what he did in fulfilling the high purposes of his mission to man, in declaring the love of God to man, in calling sinners to repentance and a new life, and in teaching man that the law of God was pure and holy and just, and that it was infinitely sacred in the sight of God. In the nature of things, it could not have been otherwise than that Jesus should suffer most intensely, and he himself have possessed the character ascribed to him in the Scriptures. It could not have been otherwise, and he have been a manifestation of the love of the Father it could not have been otherwise, and

he have been a pure and holy being, and touched with the feeling of our infirmities. But while it is undoubtedly the fact that he did not come into the world for the sake of suffering, but that he suffered in consequence of having come into the world; nevertheless his sufferings are, to my mind, an agency second to none other in moral force in the Christian dispensation. They express the love of God to man. They proclaim to all mankind how great is the concern of our Father in heaven for his children here on earth, and at what immense expense and painstaking he saw fit to acquaint them with his fatherly compassion for them. Consequently, they give to the love of God, as it has been declared by them, its principal power. That love would scarcely be able to prevail with the perverseness and obduracy of the human heart, without these sufferings. They give us an assurance of that love which we cannot question or doubt. Of all the agencies which God employs here on earth, in his dealings with mankind, love is, without any question, the most powerful and effective; but it never is so effective, so subduing, as when it is manifested under conditions of suffering,—manifested as sacrifice, as painstaking. Then it has power to soften the hardest heart, to overcome the most obstinate perversity. A very striking and affecting instance of the all-subduing and all-prevailing power of love in moving the heart, and reforming the character, is related by Dr. Tuckerman in "the Principles and Results of the Ministry at Large in Boston," which perhaps will illustrate my idea. The instance referred to was that of a pirate, apparently a man thoroughly hardened and confirmed in wickedness, who had been condemned to death. When the sentence of the court was pronounced upon him, he listened to his doom more as a demon than as a man. When Dr. Tuckerman, in whose heart the fire of Christian love was burning with a pure and holy flame, beheld that poor, miserable, abandoned creature, he had compassion on his sad condition, and determined, with the grace of God, upon his salvation. He felt that even he might be saved, and he set himself to the heavenly task. When he first visited him in his cell, he was met with language that would have repelled almost any one whose faith was not as steadfast and whose love as persevering as the gospel of Christ is capable of making them. Day after day, that man of God persevered in his holy work of heavenly compassion, but apparently without any success. But true

Christian love never despairs. It is a principle implanted in the soul by divine grace. Being this, it suffereth long and is kind; bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things. At length, some signs of relenting appeared in that poor creature. Finally, by the affectionate importunities of that compassion which at first found its way into that prison-cell, his stubborn heart was softened; and he who a few days before was ready to defy heaven and risk the flames of hell, into whose burnings he had asked, in a moment of blasphemous rage, that he might be thrown, was found pleading in tears of penitence with his heavenly Father for mercy and forgiveness. "Never have I heard," says Dr. Tuckerman, "such supplications, such entreaties for mercy, as I heard from his lips. In the midst of one of my prayers, he broke out in such impassioned and importunate cries to God, that it seemed to me as if the very stones of his cell might have responded to them. My own heart was well nigh broken by his anguish. And he died apparently the most contrite being I have ever known."

Now, what was it that moved the heart, and touched the fountain of feeling, in that miserable and hardened outcast? Christian love, all are ready to respond. And, without doubt, Christian love it was; but it was Christian love expressed in sympathy, in compassion, in suffering, and not in mere formal representation. Yes, in suffering; for it is not possible that any man could do what that minister of God's love did, without suffering, without having his pious soul wrung with anguish at the spectacle, at first of such utter depravity and impenitence, and at last of such contrition and self-accusation. And must it not have been the case that it was the suffering, the manifestation of a most intense sympathy, which first affected the prisoner, and brought him to a sense of his sin and wretchedness? May it not have been the case that the suffering of him who came to that forsaken one, with the message of God the Father's love, had more to do with his reformation than at first might be supposed? And is it probable that he would or could have been saved, without some such expression of interest in his behalf?

Thus Christ, that man of sorrow, who was acquainted with grief, came into the world, with the love of God burning in his heart, and pleading on his lips; a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, because he saw the evil which sin had done, and was

doing, in this world; how it had corrupted, and was corrupting, the human heart; how it had poisoned, and was poisoning, human affections; how it had blunted, and was blunting, human sensibilities; and what an unsightly deformity it was making of that image of God in which man was originally created; and because also he had a sympathizing, a compassionate heart. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." How? it may be asked. By assuring us, by his sufferings, that God is love. Thus "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Consider how much he must have suffered in finishing the work which had been given him to do; how much he must have suffered for our sakes, on account of the evil that is in our hearts, on account of the sins which we are cherishing in our bosoms. From what you know of human grief, from what you know of human sympathy and compassion, from what estimate you are able to form of the intenseness of the Saviour's suffering from the same causes, you may have some faint idea of it; some faint idea, but by no means an adequate one. Consider how much grief, how much anguish of spirit, you yourselves would experience, not alone of shame, not alone of indignation, but of sympathy and compassion over the child of your affections, who is leading a profligate and abandoned life,—and you will have some idea, by no means an adequate one, of the grief that weighed down the Saviour's heart, and the agony that wrung his soul, in view of a world lying in sin and wickedness; for he expressed—it must not be forgotten—the infinite concern of God's parental compassion for his lost children here on earth.

Yes, Lord Jesus, thou didst suffer for us, the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, the pure for the impure, to bring us unto God. Surely thou hast borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Thou wast wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace has been laid on thee. By thy stripes we are healed. Thou didst come unto us, when, like sheep, we had gone far astray. Thou didst come unto us with a message of love from our Father in heaven, and with the pleadings of his compassion in our behalf. Thou didst come unto us to awaken in our hearts right impressions with respect to the sacredness of God's law, that we can in

no case violate a single one, even the least of its commandments, without exposing ourselves to his holy displeasure. Thou didst come to declare unto us how great an evil sin is, and to rescue us from the wretchedness and misery into which it has brought us. Thy sufferings in our behalf, of grief, of sorrow, of compassion, — how freely were they endured! — how patiently! how submissively! Thou wast oppressed, thou wast afflicted, yet thou openedst not thy mouth. Thou wast brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so thou openedst not thy mouth. After all thy griefs and all thy sorrows, endured for our sakes, — endured in consequence of having come to us, and spoken to us of God and duty and eternity, — what do we need more? What do we need more to plead with our forgetful souls, to call us to repentance, or to assure us of God the Father's willingness to receive us graciously? How sacred henceforth shall be to our souls the law and the commandments of God! how precious his love! and how abhorrent all sin!

Christ suffered as he did suffer incidentally, in consequence of being what he was, and in consequence of having come into this world to make unto man a new revelation from Heaven. But, although he suffered incidentally, he suffered also by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." He did it, not in anger, not in wrath, not in vindictiveness, but from the necessities of his compassion. There is a sense of most solemn reality in which we must regard Christ as an offering and a sacrifice to God for our sakes; that is to say, in consequence of our sins; but in no sense that involves the idea of vindictiveness on the part of God, but rather of love and mercy. There is a sense in which the sufferings of Christ must have been highly acceptable to God, — a sense in which his paternal love must have had great pleasure in them. There is a sense in which Christ must be regarded, and honored, and confided in, as our atonement, our reconciliation with God, the propitiation for our sins.

R. P.

WINTER.*

THERE are times when it is well to leave fine speculations and curious arguments, and books and men, and business and pleasure; to leave them, with all their lessons and examples and experiences, behind; and to seek instruction from another source. The outward world, with its variety of sweet beauty and awful grandeur, and tumult and peace, is a volume whence every one might derive mental benefit and spiritual blessing in abundance, could we but know how to open and to read and to ponder it. We require *wisdom* much more than *knowledge*. For be mindful that there is a wide difference between the two. Knowledge is an acquirement taken from *other* minds; wisdom, an attainment won by attentiveness to our own. And what better helps can we have for the gaining of this inward treasure of wisdom than the influences to be gathered from that kind mother's hand — benignant and bountiful Nature — who never deceives and never wrongs one of her children? I turn to the season, now over and around us, and holding us within its arms, and invite it to be our minister, our counsellor, and our friend.

Within a few days, the storm has been on its way; and, under our sight, the look of the earth has been changed. The hill-sides and the valleys, the woods and the clearings, the fields and the meadows, — they are not as they were. They have lost their brown, bare appearance, and have taken to themselves another coloring, and a new charm. Winter has come, and stood in our midst; and with its breath has frozen over the face of streams, and with its mantle has covered up all that remained of the verdure and the harvest. Winter has come; and its signs are evident, and its shows manifest. It is no longer a prospect for the fancy to paint, but a picture to brighten the eye and gladden the heart. Winter has come; and through its dispensation the God of the seasons has given the snow-like wool, and scattered the hoar-frost like ashes.

How quickly has the year gone; the full year, since the last winter visited the earth, as it is visited now! With a fleet foot,

* This article was prepared early in the season, but was necessarily postponed. — ED.

with a swift step, it has completed its circuit. Not a day has been forgotten, not a moment lost. Time, though rapid its pace as the sun in the heavens, has been just as true as the sun to its course. Ay, true to *each* appointment, it has been faithful to *all*. The measure of the year is not wanting; no, not by a single beam of the day, not by a single shade of the night. Every opportunity, balanced to every hour, stands fair upon the record which eternity is keeping for heaven. In the sight of Him to whom "*a thousand* years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," this limited era of probation is all finished, without one jot or tittle of omission or neglect. Yet how quickly it has gone,—this long, this crowded, this eventful, this perfected year! Quickly, indeed; but oh! not in vain. Look back over its hastening flight; follow it along from point to point, from the beginning until now, through strength and through weakness, through sunshine and through storm; and be persuaded by the memories, manifold and mighty, the memories of its feelings and events, of the hopes that were its heralds, and the experience that is its gain,—be persuaded by all this, that no portion of that flying existence has been otherwise than rich and momentous. Common as the truth is, I am never weary of repeating and pressing it. Life, any lapse of it, however brief and quickly spent, has a wealth of meaning, that saves it from contumely or reproach, from indifference or neglect. Look back over the last round of the seasons, the periods of the year, symbolizing the periods of life, and they will bear witness to the same. Though they have flown quickly, they have not flown in vain.

And why have they not flown in vain? Because, if for no other reason, they have brought us on to this day; they have advanced and introduced us to this hour, this very hour of sanctity and of blessing, when we can meditate on the significance and the mystery of this deep winter-time, and interpret each for our happiness and good.

The Winter is here; and it has a meaning and a ministry. It is a teacher and a prophet. It gives lessons of wisdom and benedictions of grace. It quickens hopes of *this* life, and affords intimations of another. In fine, it furnishes aid and encouragement, both for a world-wide improvement and for a heaven-high perfection. Such is the suggestiveness and the inspiration of the

season now around us. But it is to be borne in mind, that the preceding seasons, back to the spring-time, were its fit harbingers; gradually opening the path of its approach, and preparing us for its coming; even as childhood, remotely, and through the intervening stages of youth and maturity, unfolds the way for the faltering, feeble foot and the slow step of old age.

Look back! Remembrance can glance quick as lightning over the interval. Look back to the hour; for it seems as if you could almost measure the whole space by hours. Look back to the hour when the sun, lengthening its course day by day through the heavens, darted, by degrees, its genial beams into the loosened earth, and brought forth the grass on the hillock, and the violet in the dell; when the showers were of April, and the blossoms were of May; when there was happiness in the voice of streams, and gladness in the song of birds. How gentle was the Spring! Its presence of beauty made you hopeful and light-hearted. You gave yourself up to its loveliness and love, and permitted its smile to lie on your life like a promise of joy. In all this, that chosen time dwelt with you as a *purifying* power; and its influence was felt, where the soul receives good, that is unseen but eternal.

The Summer came next, with its warmth and delight; and you opened your heart still more to its fragrance and glow; and, as well as you could, what with your labor and care, you yielded yourself to its eloquent persuasions, and grew better and wiser and nobler under the visitings of its quiet regard. What opportunities were then to be abroad; and to read that fresh Book of Revelation, wherein each morning and noon tide and evening recorded anew its divine miracles and messages of mystery! Ah! what a luxury, as well as a privilege, it was then to draw in the pure breath of life! There was no gloom in the shade, but welcome and peace, as if thus you retired to the haunts of meditation. The stillness there was not wearisome, nor the silence oppressive. Languor was not dull, vacant indolence; nor dreaminess but poor, foolish reverie. The summer was a season of gracious development and of holy desire. As such, was it not a benignant and liberal teacher; leading us tranquilly on to the peace and the rest that remaineth?

And next came the Autumn; and the freshness and the bloom began to pass by. There was a charm still upon all things; but it was the charm of a vision that must melt and disappear.

There was a brilliancy left, and a glory,—the brilliancy of skies, and the glory which leaves were putting on. But they could not long last. But there was comfort and cheer lingering yet, and perhaps to remain. For the fruitage had ripened, and “the harvest bowed its golden ears,” and the fulness of the gathered sheaf called for rejoicing. Could these things be, surrounding us at every step, without appealing to our better self, and without our special wonder? Ah! no: they obtained your attention and regard. They made you serious, not sadly, but solemnly so; for they led you to be thoughtful of the time when all must be changed, and all must die; when the preparation of life must be put to the proof; and when the fruits of human trial and experience must be ripened, and the harvest of human goodness and virtue must be gathered in,—gathered into heaven.

And, now, the *Winter* is come; it is here,—the next and the last in the series of the seasons; as Cowper calls it, the “ruler of the inverted year.” It is here, attended by its stern and shivering retinue. We are not blind to its visible tokens. We are not insensible to its prevailing power. When the frost sharpens the air, do we not shrink and tremble at its touch? When the clouds assemble their masses, are we not able to read their dread portents? When the north wind rises, and blows in its fury, can we not, as we listen, interpret its language? Familiar, indeed, to us, as sorrow and pain, are the piercing blast and the driving storm;—so familiar that we are liable to bow to their warnings, to submit to their dispensations, to accept of their issues; having covered ourselves with protection, and folded ourselves in comfort, with hardly a thought given to solving the *problem* which these chances of exposure and suffering may present. But the *problem* is worthy of being considered and solved; for how intimately is it connected with a large portion of life! I ask, then, what it is. If the winter has a peculiar ministry, I ask what it is. Ah! a ministry it has, a high and a holy one. Yes: solemnity attaches to this period; and, if the heart is but true and attentive, there shall be numbered, on this account, among its sanctified feelings, a thankfulness and an awe that shall be expressed, if not openly and in speech, at least in the silence and solitude of devotion and worship.

Let me repeat the sentiment most appropriate, now, to this subject. There is a spirit of solemnity belonging to this season.

These latter months are completing what former months commenced and carried on. The circle of a year is about to be rounded. The momentous work of a year is about to be finished. All things abroad, that address the senses and the feelings, are in harmony with this consummation and conclusion. "It is well, that winter, with the dying year, should come." It seems almost as if there were a providence in this close relationship, and therefore the touch of a blessing; although, after all, as far as any thing *can* be, it is only an arrangement of human device. Suppose, however, that it were otherwise; suppose, for instance, that, with the luxuriant promise and beauty of spring, this annual event of decadency and departure should fall, and be observed; and that fresh flowers and bright skies, the freshest and the brightest, should be the witnesses of this accomplishment, — suppose this, and how much of the moving seriousness, which now we feel, would be lost! Then, amid all that was animated and hopeful and fair, we should find it difficult to realize the fact, that time was laying down one more of its treasured epochs in the grave of the Past. But, as it is, with this comparative absence of enticing and distracting objects and voices of the earth, the heart answers to the admonitions of these hastening hours; and finds, in this very environment of bleakness and barrenness, a most favorable opportunity for growth into wisdom.

But, setting aside what may resemble a providential coincidence to which I have referred, still the beneficent Ordainer, we may be sure, has not thus brought a change over the earth, except for the *good* of his creatures. He has not given the snow like wool, and scattered the hoar-frost like ashes, without a most gracious intent. Herein lies a blessed meaning under the shadow of his hand. Look forth! and it shall be seen and be interpreted.

One of the most pathetic writers in our language has said, in a sentence often quoted as scriptural, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." As mercifully too, we may believe, he tempers all his visitations to the requirements of his children. This appears plainly, — now, for instance, — when we remember what provisions are made for hope and happiness within us, through the influence of the dread and the dreariness outside of us.

Now it is, and at such times, that *home* possesses and holds out the brightest attractions. Oh! what a charm resides now in its retirement and security, — a charm that may well call the

wild wanderer back, and restore the long-lost! The affections that cluster about the fireside,—oh! how tenderly they invite the unfortunate and the unhappy to seek *there* for a refuge and a rest! There is no place like home. The poetry it has quickened floats far and wide in strains of comfort and inspiration over the earth. *Sweet* home! what music in the word! It melts into one sound the names we love best. It is expressive—is it not?—of interests, the dearest and most divine, which reach beyond the bounds of earth and of time; into the distance and the future; into heaven and its peace. I cannot speak of it. Words fail to tell what the true heart must feel. But to this place, this holy place, there is an invitation given now, stronger than any loudly or gaily re-echoed by the tempting ambitions and pleasures and follies of the world. Yes; and the beautiful bonds of domestic endearment are the more closely drawn between hearts, as there is less elsewhere, in the secret haunts and the highroads of nature, to beguile the restless mind, and allure the loitering foot. At the hand of winter you receive this advantage; and does it not far more than compensate for all its deprivations?

Deprivations! why do I say this? The term is out of place. For what *have* you lost? Nothing—that would satisfy; nothing worth regret. The privileges under the present auspices,—the privileges that now order and circumscribe your delights, are more abundant and affluent; and, day by day, as you measure them rightly, will become still more so; abundant and affluent to a larger degree than any which hitherto may have won your regard and wakened your desire among wider and more general relations.

Enter the little circle, where no stranger intrudes, and cultivate the *affections*,—the pure, deep, faithful affections, that survive all trial, all error, all change; and doubt not they will yield you a more grateful and profitable harvest than has ever been reaped and gathered into barns. Go in, and sit by the cheerful blaze; and, as the tumult of conflicting cares subsides, and the discordant sounds of other scenes grow less distinct and faint away, there linger and wait for the delicate offices of love. Be eager to receive, and diligent to reciprocate, each nameless tribute of tenderness; and, as the evening shadows fall, there sit, and, in the low tones of confidence, talk of human joys and human hopes; and meditate in a silence that is eloquent as speech,—meditate of what is gone, and of what is to come. Be thus re-

ceptive of the blessings and benefits of *home*, and you shall be happier and better; wiser for this world, richer for heaven.

Wisdom for this world, and riches for heaven! And it is well to reflect that you hold the means and the leisure requisite for these exalted attainments, independently of the immediate quiet and intercourse of the household affections. The *mind* needs a cherishing care as well as the *heart*. Knowledge and tenderness must never be divorced. They must recommend and aid and balance each other. In this way, softness of feeling becomes firm and reliable, and roughness of intellect becomes gentle and refined. And to this end, what opportunities are now granted! The brain can be busy, without loss to the hands. Talent and taste may be stirred and unfolded, to such purpose, indeed, that, in the future, industry shall have higher honor; and coarse, hard employment, kinder compensations. Let books be your companions, your friends; and thus hold communion with the master-minds of all ages, even as you do with the loving hearts in your own family.

For the mind and the heart, it is evident, there is permitted no lack of influence, both elevating and genial. The season, unfruitful as it is in other respects, generously ministers to their tendencies and wants. Infinitely more important is it, however, than it should minister freely to the utmost needs, to the finest sensibilities, to the best inclinations of the soul. Viewed in this connection especially, the winter has a wealth of meaning that deserves interpretation. It is a time for severe study, for profound meditation, — higher and deeper than has yet been suggested; a time for the self-scrutiny that is sincere, and for the thought that lays hold upon eternity; a time for that still reckoning up of life, when conscience judges fairly, and decides, with impartial strictness, between the claims of duty and its performance, the claims of endeavor and accomplishment, of sentiment and principle, of faith and works; a time when we may well pause, as if within the shadow of the year, and repent and resolve, and confess and pray.

What themes are these! — none greater, none better! And here is an interval set apart for their unfolding and application. Let the Past then speak to us, while it may, with teaching and admonishment. There it lies, far off and nearer, a mingled shade and brightness, — a dream upon the memory, yet something *better* than a dream; for it has been real, and been known and felt

and tried and proved. What happy plans are there, defeated as if by fate, interrupted by sorrow, ended in gloom! What hopes are there, like flowers that bloomed in the morning, and withered before night! It is the sum of experience, of a *sad* experience, perhaps, on which we look. It is the long, hard lesson of a varied life, which it will profit us to review. Be not unwilling nor slow to attend to the history of hours that have vanished. They will teach us fitly and truly. They will give us the only instruction on which we may rely. It is true they may humble our pride, and bring a blight upon our vanity. But, if we so choose, they shall give strength to our weakness, and light to our darkness; and bless us with an added wisdom and virtue, which nothing can take away.

It is a time for the heart to count over its lost treasures, to think of friends who have changed, and friends who are dead. The old familiar faces come back to us, and smile, as they used, upon our sorrow and pain, our loneliness and regret. The absent,—the dead, who never did us wrong, who always sought our good,—they choose this season to enter our retirement, and to give it some cheer. Yes,—

"The forms of the departed
Enter at the open door;
The beloved ones, the true-hearted,
Come to visit us once more."

It is the same, too, with those who have changed; who are separated from us by injured confidence, by misfortune or mistake,—they all come back. And the absent,—the living also, whom distance only can keep from our hearts,—they all come back, and sit by our side, and speak to us kindly as ever. The darkness of the grave, and differences of opinion, and alienations of feeling, and distance and time, disappear; and we are almost cheated into the belief that life is as it was, and its companionship the same. The delusion must pass. But it leaves behind a benefit and a benediction; and we go into the world again with a purer purpose and a firmer faith.

It is a time, moreover, to think of the inevitable, or the possible, painful passages of our human lot; of present or impending sickness or sorrow, or weariness or want; to think that such *our* life may be, as it is to many, a lengthening tissue of trouble

and distress ; to think, too, in the view of that dread dispensation, of the mercy which has shielded and saved us so long ; and, with thoughts of supplication, to implore a continuance, to the end, of that loving-kindness and tender care, which cannot but avert much of the misery of the children of men.

And finally, it is the time, with a wider meditation, to contemplate those broadcast evils of penury, and all kinds of wretchedness and degradation attendant on penury, which afflict so large a portion of the race. The winter wind is a preacher of charity ; not of the charity alone which is content with giving out supplies of raiment or food, or any physical comfort ; but of that charity which would fill the heart of the destitute and despairing with the warmth of Christian compassion and love ; and which would so clothe the soul of the forlorn and forsaken on earth with purity and with trust, that it may become worthy of the beautiful promise and beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Such is the ministry of winter, as I conceive it, in part ; and briefly sketched. But there is a sphere of being beyond this scene of life ; and the winter, that looks hopefully forward to the spring, may direct our thoughts to the joys of that coming immortality. Thomson closes his poem on the Seasons with a similar train of reflections ; and I will quote his lines in conclusion :

" 'Tis come, the second birth
Of heaven and earth ! Awakening Nature hears
The new-creating word, and starts to life.
Ye noble ones ! who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile :
The storms of wintry Time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded Spring encircle all."

R. P. R.

To believe that there is no God to judge the world is hugely suitable to that man's interest who assuredly knows, that upon such a judgment he shall be condemned ; and to assert that there is no hell must needs be a very benign opinion to a person engaged in such actions as he knows must certainly bring him thither. Men are atheists, not because they have better wits than other men, but because they have corrupter wills ; not because they reason better, but because they live worse. — *South.*

BETHLEHEM AND THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

A SERMON, BY REV. A. LAMSON, D.D.

MATT. ii. 6 : " And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda ; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

IN discoursing from these words, I shall not attempt any high argument. I have, on former occasions of this kind, discussed, as I best could, and more or less at length, topics connected with the coming of Christ and with Christian history.* My purpose at present is a simple one. I wish to go back to the times of the Saviour, and linger on some spots which were familiar to his eye, and recall some facts and narratives associated with them, and which may furnish a suitable theme for this morning's meditation. Topics of this kind, occasionally touched upon, have their use. They serve to refresh the memory on subjects of scripture-history ; they bring the venerable past before us ; they show the relation of things, the connection of which may not at first appear obvious, and the origin of ideas and usages ; they furnish materials for comparison and contrast ; and out of all these start up before the mind certain great truths, which it is important to recognize, and from meditating on which good may come. Judea is hallowed to the affections ; it is Holy Land to Christians as well as to Jews. There is scarcely a spot in it which can be visited without emotion, even in imagination ; for every spot almost has its history, and that history, from one or another cause, has a moral and religious worth.

There are two spots particularly to which I would direct my footsteps this morning, — Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives, — the first and last places of the Saviour's appearance on earth, the beginning and the end. Both are peculiarly sacred to the hearts of believers, and by a very natural association may be brought together. " And thou, Bethlehem of Juda, art not the least of the princes" — princely cities — " of Juda ; for out of thee shall come a ruler, that shall rule my people Israel ; " or, as the original word signifies, " feed," or tend as a flock ; for, by a beau-

* Some expressions and imagery contained in this discourse show, that it was originally prepared for a Christmas sermon : it has not been thought worth while to attempt to expunge them.

tiful and expressive metaphor, kings were, in primitive times, called "shepherds of the people." "Not the least;" so far does spiritual exceed temporal pre-eminence. Bethlehem,—there is no other name more hallowed. There is but one Bethlehem; and over another that mild, guiding star shall never stand. Many cities and places have sometimes contended for the honor of having given birth to the sons of fame, the great ones of the earth; but this little city wears the brightest crown of all, and wears it undisputed, —this princely Bethlehem of Juda.

Let us glance for a moment at its history; for it had already been the scene of some remarkable incidents, and of one particularly beautiful and touching narrative. It has its name from a Hebrew word, or words, signifying "house of bread," the "bread city," so called from the fertility of the district in which it is situated, on the sloping sides of a range of beautiful hills. It lies in a south-westerly direction from Jerusalem, on the way from Hebron to the holy city. From Hebron, the ancient Mamre, where Abraham tended his flocks, and where was the burial-place of his family, in the cave of Machpelah, the distance to Bethlehem is about five or six hours' journey, and two or three thence to Jerusalem. There was a city of Galilee, in the tribe of Zebulon, of the same name, to distinguish it from which, this is called Bethlehem of Juda. Its ancient name was Ephrath, *fruitful*, which name was sometimes retained along with the other; hence the "Bethlehem Ephratah" of the prophet.

There is in the Old Testament, connected with this spot, a little narrative of quiet and tranquil beauty, revealing something of the primitive domestic manners of the Hebrews; for it is to be referred to the time of the Judges, before the existence of the monarchy. It may be called a narrative of the affections; it is a short family history; and, however singular some of the incidents may appear, judged by a modern standard, yet, viewed in connection with ideas of pristine oriental simplicity, all seeming objections vanish, and the unsophisticated story presents a picture the more charming, as it shows that, even in times of great social disorder and in a rude age, there may exist, in the bosom of society, the true peace and happiness of gentle, trusting hearts. There are "green spots" everywhere in the history of the past; but the pen of the annalist too often passes by them, and records only shining deeds, too frequently deeds of violence and blood.

You will understand me as referring to the story of Naomi and Ruth. Naomi dwelt at Bethlehem, and in a time of famine goes to the land of Moab, with her husband and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, who marry there. Not long after, the father and both the sons die; and Naomi is left alone with only her two daughters-in-law for comforters, in the land of strangers. The famine at an end, she feels a longing to return to her home and her kindred. She proposes to go and leave her foreign daughters-in-law in the land of their nativity. But they said, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." She attempts to dissuade them; for she would not take them to her desolate habitation. There is much weeping. One is persuaded to remain. But Ruth cannot leave her mother-in-law, and go back to her own people and her gods. She "clave," says the account, "to her;" saying, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried." Naomi, finding her thus determined, says no more, and they take their departure. On their way to Bethlehem from Moab, the sad couple pass through Hebron; the "gentle, unselfish Ruth," so full of heart and sympathy,—a stranger then in Judea,—little dreaming that a few years later there should be crowned in the city, which then stretched before her eyes, a great king, who, in addition to his heroic qualities, should also be the author of the sublimest lyrics the world ever saw; who "should so sing," as one has said, "as that the human race should echo his strains through all future time; and who should take the strong rock-fort of Jebus, some way to the north, and make of it a city so holy as that its very name should be music for ever;" and that king should be her great-grandson, for so David was.

They pursue their way to Bethlehem,—old Naomi and her youthful daughter-in-law. There, Ruth goes to glean after the reapers,—for it was the time of the barley harvest,—and "her hap was," says the narrative, "to light on the part of the field belonging to Boaz," who was a worthy kinsman of her lost husband. She and her mother were now poor, and this practice was common; for the Jewish law, ever attentive to the claims of the destitute and helpless, contained the following humane provision (Levit. xix. 9, 10): "When ye reap the harvest of your land,

thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger." Boaz, upright, considerate, and humane, going out to visit his reapers, observes the sad-featured stranger, and, inquiring who she was, learns her history, and gives direction that she be treated with kindness and respect; and some time after, according to old Hebrew ideas and usages, makes her his wife.

Wait a few years, and visit again this quiet, humble Bethlehem, embosomed among the hills six or eight miles south by west from the stronghold of the Jebusites, afterwards Jerusalem; the sweet tones of a harp are heard echoing among those hills, and you see a shepherd-boy, in the prime of youth, "ruddy and of a beautiful countenance," now seeking, as a traveller recently on the spot expresses it, "smooth stones for his sling among the brooks, and now delighting himself with that young song, which was to grow divine, and become the worship of future ages and nations,—in the islands of the Southern Ocean, and the cathedrals of Europe, and among the forests of the Western World." This was the son of Jesse, the descendant of that Ruth who had left her country to worship the God of Naomi, to live where she lived, and die where she died. He is afterwards crowned king in Hebron. The primitive idea of the kingly office, to which I alluded near the commencement of my discourse, is well and beautifully presented in one of the Psalms which alludes to his early occupation (Ps. lxxviii. 70—72): "He chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds; from following the ewes he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and the skilfulness of his hands." His fortunes as a monarch I need not recount. His Psalms, yet sung in Christian churches, and suited to every variety of emotion, from the deepest penitence to the sublimest adoration, are what have cast an imperishable glory around his name. It is not the monarch, but the "sweet singer of Israel," who lives and will for ever live in the hearts of Christians, till the last sigh of contrition shall have been breathed, and the last note of praise shall have ascended from human lips.

As being the birth-place of their great hero-king, the little

town became venerable in the eyes of the Jews, and received the honored title of the "city of David." Round it were clustered all those interesting hopes of the nation which centered in the Messiah, who was to come to sit on the throne of his ancestor, and reign there for ever. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah," says the prophet Micah, "though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel." So when the wise men of the East came to bring their offerings to the infant Jesus, and Herod, troubled in mind, sent to inquire where Christ should be born, the reply of the priests and scribes was, "In Bethlehem, of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet." The city had now received its crowning distinction; for Joseph and Mary, he being of the lineage of David, had gone to Bethlehem, the "city of David, to be taxed;" and there the event took place which was to change the character of the whole civilization of the globe, and fill with a holy joy millions on millions of hearts to the end of time.

And how little changed was Bethlehem in the interval of more than a thousand years! The shepherds were still keeping their flocks as in the days of the son of Jesse. And to the ears of these humble men, — not to princes, and the great of the earth, — the learned, the subtle, the disputers of this world, the revellers in the banqueting-halls of luxury, the self-righteous Pharisee, the haughty Rabbi, — did the angelic message come: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" no warlike prince, no man of iron mould, — a man of war, like David, — no achiever of earthly victories over Philistine or Jebusite, which should call forth national rejoicings, and be extolled throughout the land with timbrel, and dancing, and jubilant voices, as of old: —

"Saul hath slain his thousands,
David his ten thousands."

No. He was to be a shepherd-king in a higher sense than they of elder time. The spiritual leader of his people, he should guide his flock to the still waters of comfort: he should "gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom;" he should lead in the way of truth and righteousness.

" Green pastures and clear streams,
Freedom and quiet rest,
Christ's flock enjoy, beneath his beams,
Or in his shadow, blest.

The wounded and the weak
He comforts, heals, and binds ;
The lost he came from heaven to seek,
And saves them when he finds."

His reign was to be peaceful ; he should be called the " Prince of peace."

He of old erected for himself a beautiful palace in the city he had taken from the Jebusites ; and, when his wars were ended, the religious monarch proposed to build a temple to Jehovah ; but he was forbidden, and the reason assigned is worthy of notice ; for it shows that even then glimpses of the higher truths began to appear. God is introduced as saying, " Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (1 Chron. xxviii. 3). It is something that the disqualification was felt : the diviner instinct even then spoke against war. The song of the heavenly host at Jesus' birth was, " On earth peace ; good-will towards men." And to unwarlike shepherds was the annunciation of the welcome tidings of his birth first made. And what were his first words, when he began to preach, at Nazareth, where he had been brought up ? " The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the gospel" — glad tidings — " to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind ; to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And he said, " This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And what precepts did he deliver respecting the pure in heart, the meek, the peaceful, and they who should hunger and thirst after righteousness ! And what words were those, " Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" !

Bethlehem ! Out of it had formerly come the great warrior, the chivalrous hero, the man who " shed blood," the conqueror by the sword ; but now the spiritual deliverer, the shepherd of souls, the teacher of humility, the comforter of them that mourn, the strength-

ener of the weak, the friend of the penitent, the revealer of the law of love, the conqueror of death, the giver of life; for "the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" and his glory was, that he was "the way, the truth, and the LIFE."

No star stood over Bethlehem at the birth of that "man of war" of old; no angel's song and no music filled the skies. No peaceful sages came, with myrrh, spices, and incense, to do homage; for the time for the "day-spring from on high" had not arrived; those who sat in darkness saw no light; the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the joy of all people, had not come. He who established his throne in Jerusalem was the terror of the nations. How changed now! No terrors; no flaming sword now; no "red right arm;" no vengeance on flying foe; no marshalled hosts; but only the sword of the spirit, only weapons of gentleness and love,—a revelation, not of the God of battles, but of a Father's mercy.

Bethlehem! how changed, though unchanged! Thy skies and thy fields, thy hills and valleys, remain the same; but a more loving atmosphere envelops thee. In that manger-cradle sleeps the son of peace and consolation. Mary is pondering in her heart what mean all these events and these signs. That child is set for "the fall and rising again of many in Israel," and for a sign that shall be spoken against. And that mother shall weep at the sight of a crown of thorns and a cross; but woman's heart is formed for faith and hope, and, last at the cross and earliest at the sepulchre, she shall be rewarded by a sight of the risen Jesus; and the spiritual cause shall triumph; and that infant of Bethlehem shall overcome, and sit with the Father on his throne in a sense never thought of by the old, earthly monarch, and those who spoke of the Son who should sit upon his throne for ever.

The soil of Bethlehem has been for ever consecrated by the foot of the Redeemer. It has been visited with reverence by Christians from very early times, and will continue to be while the earth remains, or the dews of heaven descend. As to the different localities, and, among the rest, the grotto over which stands the "Church of the Nativity," and where the Saviour is said to have been born, there will always exist some uncertainty. The superstitions of the place, which regard altogether the letter, the outward, the traditional, and the doubtful, are silly and disgusting enough; and one must penetrate beneath them to get at the real, spiritual significance of what meets the eye.

I have spoken of Bethlehem before the time of the Saviour, when the shepherd-boy roamed there, whose lyre could for a time lull the fierce spirit and subdue the madness of Saul, and whose song now soothes and animates Christian hearts in all lands. We must cast a single glance at the spot at a later period,—four centuries nearly after Christ had left the world. In a cave or cell, at the place of the infant's birth, you observe a thoughtful, pale-faced old man, of venerable aspect, bending intently over a mass of manuscripts that lie before him. He has travelled over all parts of the known world, from Gaul to the Euphrates and the pyramids of Egypt. He led a gay youth, but was well educated, and was an ardent admirer of the classical remains of Greece and Rome; a worshipper almost of Cicero. He becomes, however, religiously impressed; and the "enthusiasm first kindled on the banks of the Moselle," in France, assumes a somewhat austere character in the dissolute capital of Syria, which he afterwards visits. He adopts monastic habits, and passes sometime in a desert far in the East, but not in idleness. He appears again in the world; and the fame of his learning, eloquence, and sanctity fills all Christendom. He travels again; visits Rome, Egypt, and other places, but cannot rest until he had seen the Holy Land. He traverses it, tracing the footprints of the Saviour, and finally fixes himself in his cell at Bethlehem; and there, among other works, still treated with respect by all Christians, applies himself to a translation, before begun, of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, from Hebrew and Greek into the Latin tongue; the old translations, originally badly executed, having fallen into inextricable confusion. That old man, thus piously employed, is the celebrated Jerome; and the translation he is executing is afterwards known as the Latin Vulgate, containing the standard text of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus light again went forth from Bethlehem. This translation put the Scriptures into the hands of multitudes, in a language they could read and understand. Jerome had strong passions, and was chargeable with some errors and extravagances; but he left an enduring and well-earned fame. With an enthusiastic temperament and profound piety, somewhat tinctured with asceticism, he united more learning and eloquence than were possessed by any other man of his age, Pagan or Christian. Such men, yea, all the great lights which shine through the dim mists of the Chris-

tian past, were made what they were by the birth of that child of Bethlehem; the influence of which has been felt through all the regions of thought, literature, education, and domestic and social life.

But it is time to leave Bethlehem, so little in itself, yet so great in objects of reverence and interest, a princess among the cities of Judah, and go to the Mount of Olives. You know the history of what lay between: the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw, and the dead were re-animated; tidings of peace and forgiveness were preached, — of the Father's love, and man's immortal hope. You remember Cana and Nain, the well of Samaria, and Bethany; the Supper with the disciples in that retired upper room; Judas, Peter, Gethsemane; the mock crown and sceptre; Calvary, the tomb, and the annunciation to the weeping Maries, "He is not here, he is risen." Let us go out through the winding path over the brook Cedron to the Mount of Olives, at the foot of which stood Bethany, for ever endeared to the memory of believers as the dwelling-place of the three friends of Jesus, where he occasionally paused, amid his weary travels and labors, for refreshment and rest in the bosom of a beloved family; for there Lazarus and his sisters dwelt. We will look back for a moment at Jerusalem, which that old king, born in Bethlehem, had from a rock-fortress converted into a beautiful city; and where, when his last sands had run out, and his sun had set in clouds, he found a sepulchre. Contrast the dying words of that "man of war" with those of Jesus breathed on the same spot. Dark and revengeful passions rankled in the breast of David to the last. His dying speech — not singular in that age and country — was yet such as no Christian could utter. How strange the compound of feelings which find expression in it! "Now the days of David drew near that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes and his commandments, . . . that thou mayest prosper in all that thou dost, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself." Wise, beautiful counsel! Yet, in the face of it, he turns and gives command concerning the aged Joab: "Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." To the sons of Barzillai he would have kindness shown; for, says he, "they came to me when I fled because of Absalom, thy brother." Shimei, who had once "cursed" him,

he had spared, he observes, on account of an oath he had taken not to put him to death with the sword; but, says he to Solomon, "Hold him not guiltless, . . . but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood;" words one almost shudders to repeat, coming from a dying man. So the monarch passed away, carrying resentment to the grave with him. Was he not unfit to build a house to God's name? He "slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David." Turn now to that mightier one, who also died at Jerusalem as he was born in Bethlehem, both cities of David. He expires with the prayer of forgiveness for his enemies on his lips: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." There is this difference between the old and the new, the earthly and the heavenly king. The birth-song of peace, the death-prayer of forgiveness, showed how much diviner was the latter; for he had all the fulness of God, which the other had not.

Pause again on the side of the mount. From this spot over against the temple, the city rises to view in all its beauty and picturesqueness. It was from this spot, that, looking upon the majestic structure opposite, with its "goodly stones" and ornaments, Jesus pronounced the terrible doom of the city. He foretold the coming desolation, with the signs that should precede, and the dreadful wars that should accompany it, in language of fearful distinctness and sublimity; portions of which, taken too literally by the early disciples, led to the expectation of his speedy visible return in the clouds; but his reign is in heaven, and upon earth only in the hearts of his followers,—in the new moral creation,—"the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

From the Mount of Olives, all things being fulfilled, he went up into heaven, and his disciples saw him no more. Superstition professes to point out his last footprints before he rose to the bosom of the cloud; but such precision it is idle to seek. It is better to meditate on the general incidents recorded, and seek to penetrate their spiritual import, than to perplex one's self about minute localities, which cannot be known; and which, if they could be determined, would not help us to win the crown of well-doing to the end. The veil which time has silently let fall over them, we need not vainly attempt to raise. Enough has been preserved from oblivion to nourish our faith, and help our spirits to ascend.

Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives,—the scenes at both were peaceful. The song, the star, the hour, the coming of the wise men given to tranquil meditation,—they were peaceful and meek; there was no martial strain, no courtly pomp.

"The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began."

And there was peace on the mount, on green Olivet, and he ascended in the attitude of blessing. And there was "joy," too; for with "great joy," it is said, the disciples returned to Jerusalem after he had parted from them. But it was different from the joy of Bethlehem. The joy of Bethlehem was of a birth into this world; that of Olivet, of the leaving it to go to the Father, and was the more purely spiritual of the two. The one stood at the beginning, and preceded temptation and trial; the other at the end, after the world had been overcome,—it was the joy of victory. Compare the shepherds with the disciples on the mount of ascension. The shepherds knew little of the spiritual purport of what they saw and heard,—only they rejoiced, and praised God that a great deliverer had arisen: the disciples, though not fully enlightened, yet knew more,—they had resigned their hope of an earthly kingdom; they no more dreamed of a worldly Messiah, who should restore the kingdom to Israel; their minds had been in a measure purified and elevated by their intercourse with that meek and holy one, by his agony and cross, and the communications he had with them after he was risen. They were changed from what they were, when they left their nets, or other implements of their humble callings, to follow him; and hence they could return to Jerusalem with joy in their hearts, after he had left them to be seen of them no more. They had now some glimpse of the spiritual world; some conception of things not of earth, earthly.

Olivet, green Olivet! fit place for the ascent of him who came to teach the way of peace and life. The olive,—symbol of peace, gladness, and prosperity,—its bright, green leaves perennial, fadless,—we readily associate it with life and joy, and the many precious blessings Christ came to impart through those holy words

and holy influences of his religion and cross, which should never pass away, but should go down to all time to renovate the earth, and clothe it with moral freshness and verdure. Not barren, like the cedar and the fir, its never-withering leaf is emblem of enduring affection, — of love which the winter of the grave cannot kill. When the dove returned to the ark with the green olive-leaf in her mouth, the patriarch knew that God had remembered him, and he should receive the reward of his faithfulness. The Christian follows his Saviour from Bethlehem to Olivet; and, as he sees him depart with hands outstretched to bless, joy lights his countenance, and with a new and more exalted sense of its significance he can unite in the angelic song, "On earth, peace; good-will toward men."

UNITARIANISM IN WASHINGTON.

It can do Unitarians no harm to know what is said of them by a man of business, shrewd, intelligent, practical, looking about him with open eyes, a good deal used to humankind; given a little to thinking, but more to observing and acting. Even though he should be biased or hostile in his judgment, his strictures may suggest something useful. Such a person, as we happen to know, is the Washington correspondent of the "New York Tribune." Writing from an independent position, he does not trim his opinions; and, writing much and often, he does not smooth the rough edges of his phraseology. After speaking of Dr. Dewey's preaching, with commendation and otherwise, he goes on: —

"But what I have to say refers not to the individual Unitarian, but to Unitarianism; a form of Christianity, which, with all its apparent reasonableness, does not flourish, and does not spread. In addition to its vital defect of not recognizing the urgency of the devotional principle in man, it strikes me that its preachers represent in their modes of thought, and in their conceptions of humanity, but a very limited number of minds. They are not *popular* preachers, because they do not excite or reflect ideas which possess universality, or a wide-spread existence among men. They do not strike those chords that reach through the universal humanity.

They play on instruments, that, like the new pianos, have extra octaves; and they only strike the high keys. They play no common tunes. And if they ever touch the low notes, it is only to show how mean they are, by flying off to a sudden contrast on the high. Now, elaborate religion, like elaborate music, does not answer for the humble and unsophisticated. None but the initiated comprehend it. Swedenborgianism does not prosper, but Methodism does. When the minister says, 'Believe or be damned,' the hearer knows just what he means. If he tells you the Bible is a *revelation*, and therefore the standard to go by, and by which every moral act of our lives must be rightly judged; and further, that it affords the *only* proof of certain momentous facts, like human immortality for example,—there is some *nub* to the preaching. But if it is only intimated that the Bible is a pretty fair kind of a book, but with some ridiculous things in it; that immortality rests on *consciousness*, and that we ought to be virtuous because we shall thus be happy; and that, if we are damned at all hereafter, it will be in an easy and genteel way, and without the vile adjuncts of fire and brimstone, people soon go to sleep over the preaching.

"Between the namby-pambyism of a milk-and-water religion, whose beginning, middle, and end is the nurse's injunction, 'Be good,' and cloven-hoofed Catholicism, with its mummeries and its transubstantiation, its purgatory and its worse place;—between the earth-born and unsatisfying doctrines of Price, Priestley, Parker, and we do not know how many other P's and preachers of the natural religion, and the red-hot singeing doctrines of old John Calvin, we do not think a man of sense can long hesitate. If a man wants religion at all, he wants the *supernatural*, not the natural. We go with Brownson on this point, as he is since his conversion from heathenism. A man's religion, to answer the vital purpose of religion, must rest on his *faith*, not on his reason. In the language of Dryden, in his 'Hind and Panther':—

'Faith is the best insurer of our bliss;
The bank above must fail, before the venture miss.'

"A religion to be a religion, must *come down*, and not be *built up*. If there is no foundation for the idea of the connection of the *supernatural* with the natural, the whole idea of a religion, in the common acceptation of the term, is a humbug. If there be a foundation, the proof of it exists in the Bible, and men must go by the record, whether they like it or lump it. In a word, they must 'believe or be damned.' J. S. P.